



NEWS RELEASE

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Do Your Part to Help the Environment by Counting Birds in Alabama's National Forests

Montgomery, AL. (Feb. 5, 2008) ---- The U.S. Forest Service is encouraging the public to participate in the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count by counting birds in Alabama's national forests. Sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual event that will begin during the President's Day weekend, February 15-18. Participants can volunteer by spending at least 15 minutes counting the greatest number of individual birds in each species. You can count birds in the Bankhead, Talladega, Conecuh and Tuskegee National Forests or in your own backyard, a neighborhood, or a local park. Participants can enter their bird count totals online at www.birdcount.org. It is a wonderful opportunity to view nature at its best while providing information scientists can use to answer questions about birds and the environment. Reports from the Great Backyard Bird Count will help scientists learn more about how environmental changes may affect North American birds.

"Counting birds is not only enjoyable for birdwatchers, but it is a valuable tool that will help us in determining the national forest contributions to habitats," said Miera Crawford Nagy, forest supervisor for the National Forests in Alabama. Forest Service wildlife biologists conduct bird surveys to track bird population trends and relate landscape-scale habitat changes to these trends. They aim to restore and protect key bird habitats through forests thinning, prescribed burning, and wildlife habitat improvement treatments.

In fiscal year 2007, the National Forests in Alabama restored or enhanced 2,545 acres for Alabama's birds, such as the Brown-headed Nuthatch, Northern Bobwhite quail, and the Prairie Warbler. "Another

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2,061 acres were improved for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers,” said National Forests in Alabama Forest Biologist, Dagmar Thurmond. “Birds are associated with key habitat characteristics which make monitoring their populations especially meaningful to forest managers,” said Thurmond. The Great Backyard Bird Count is another way the Forest Service can try to measure the habitat contributions forests make to bird populations.

Visit www.birdcount.org to obtain identification lists and forms before visiting the national forests. Contact a Forest Service district office for information on popular bird watching spots, Forest Service maps, and wildlife identification books. The following Forest Service district offices are: Bankhead District (205) 489-5111 in Double Springs, AL; Conecuh District (334) 222-2555 in Andalusia, AL; Shoal Creek District (256) 463-2272 in Heflin, AL; Talladega District (256) 362-2909 in Talladega, AL; Oakmulgee District (205) 926-9765 in Brent, AL; and the Tuskegee District (334) 727-2652 in Tuskegee, AL. Additional information about the National Forests in Alabama can be located on the website at www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/alabama.